

Assembly Bill No. 2480

CHAPTER 695

An act to add Section 108.5 to the Water Code, relating to water.

[Approved by Governor September 27, 2016. Filed with
Secretary of State September 27, 2016.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2480, Bloom. Source watersheds: financing.

Existing law establishes various state water policies, including the policy that the Legislature consider other works as may be necessary to develop water to satisfy the requirements of the watershed in which water originates whenever the Legislature authorizes the construction or acquisition of a project that will develop water for use outside that watershed, as specified.

This bill would declare it to be state policy that source watersheds are recognized and defined as integral components of California's water infrastructure. The bill would state the particular importance to maintaining the reliability, quantity, timing, and quality of California's environmental, drinking, and agricultural water supply as climate change advances of source watersheds that supply the majority of the state's drinking and irrigated agricultural water. The bill would state that the maintenance and repair of source watersheds is eligible for the same forms of financing as other water collection and treatment infrastructure and would specify that the maintenance and repair activities that are eligible are limited to specified forest ecosystem restoration and conservation activities.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 108.5 is added to the Water Code, to read:

108.5. (a) It is hereby declared to be the established policy of the state that source watersheds are recognized and defined as integral components of California's water infrastructure.

(b) (1) As climate change advances, source watersheds that provide the majority of the state's drinking and irrigated agricultural water are of particular importance to maintaining the reliability, quantity, timing, and quality of California's environmental, drinking, and agricultural water supply.

(2) Recognizing the critical role of source watersheds in enhancing water supply reliability, the maintenance and repair of source watersheds is eligible for the same forms of financing as other water collection and treatment infrastructure.

(3) Nothing in this section is intended to constrain financing for source watersheds supplying local, state, or federal water systems.

(4) Nothing in this section is intended to supersede federal eligibility requirements or alter any of the following:

(A) Funding criteria or guidelines established for a bond or other measure enacted by the voters.

(B) Funding programs related to pollution control, cleanup, or abatement.

(C) Funding programs for addressing public health emergencies.

(c) Eligible maintenance and repair activities pursuant to this section are limited to the following forest ecosystem restoration and conservation activities:

(1) Upland vegetation management to restore the watershed's productivity and resiliency.

(2) Wet and dry meadow restoration.

(3) Road removal and repair.

(4) Stream channel restoration.

(5) Conservation of private forests to preserve watershed integrity through permanent prevention of land use conversion and improved land management, achieved through, and secured with, conservation easements.

(6) Other projects with a demonstrated likelihood of increasing conditions for water and snow attraction, retention, and release under changing climate conditions.